

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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HOUSE PASSES MARKEY PRIVACY AMENDMENT TO TRANSPORTATION, TREASURY APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Lawmaker's amendment passes following announcement of \$20 million IRS-ChoicePoint contract

Washington, DC: Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Co-Chairman of the Congressional Privacy Caucus, today offered a privacy amendment to H.R. 3058, the Transportation, Treasury and Housing spending bill. Rep. Markey's amendment, which prevents any funding in the bill from being spent on any activities that violate the Privacy Act or regulations that implement the Act, was accepted by the Appropriations Subcommittee responsible for drafting H.R. 3058 and will be included in the House version of the legislation.

"This week, the IRS announced it signed a \$20 million contract with ChoicePoint, the mammoth data profiling company that leaked the personal information of an estimated 145,000 Americans as result of a breach of its operations in February 2005. The recent wave of privacy thefts has swept up the personal information of almost 50 million Americans. The Federal government's increasing reliance on third party contractors such as ChoicePoint, LexisNexis and other companies to collect, analyze and process personal information about U.S. residents requires an urgent reminder to government agencies and their contractors of their obligations under the Privacy Act. My amendment that the House included in the Transportation, Treasury spending bill today underscores the importance of the Act's requirements, which are designed to protect the privacy of individuals whose information is collected for various purposes," Rep. Markey said.

"While the Privacy Act does a very good job of curbing Big Brother's ability to peep into our personal business, there is an increasing risk of massive privacy breaches caused by what some have called "Big Brother's Little Helpers" – the information brokers and dating mining firms that federal agencies are increasingly using to gather and analyze personal data about the American public. My amendment puts agencies funded through this bill on notice that they must pay very close attention to how they – and any contractors they may hire – comply with the Privacy Act. It does not change current law, but it does reaffirm our commitment to the strong privacy principles embodied in the Privacy Act. I will continue to work to strengthen privacy safeguards on personal information and ensure that this provision is included in the final version of this spending bill," Rep. Markey concluded.

For information on Rep. Markey's efforts to strengthen privacy protections, visit www.house.gov/markey

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